DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 695 HE 022 553

AUTHOR Scott, Robert A.
TITLE Strategic Plans and Self-Studies: Seldom Linked, Always Tied.
PUB DATE 16 Aug 88
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (Greensboro, NC, August 16, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accreditation (Institutions); *College Administration; *College Planning; Decision Making; Educational Assessment; Higher Education; Institutional Characteristics; *Institutional Evaluation; Institutional Survival; Policy Formation; *Self Evaluation (Groups)
IDENTIFIERS Strategic Management; *Strategic Planning

ABSTRACT

A primer on strategic planning related to institutional self-studies and attempts at assessment is outlined. The refinement of a strategic plan and the preparation for continued accreditation are major events in an institution's life, but the two processes are too often kept separate. Strategic planning requires that an institution know who it is; where it is going; how it proposes to get there; and the leadership, staff, and financial resources necessary for the trip. Nine sections are as follows: (1) introduction; (2) what it is; (3) why it is done; (4) who does it; (5) when it is done; (6) where it is done; (7) how it is done; (8) what the benefits are; and (9) conclusions toward strategic management. Strategic planning provides guidance for future actions. It helps relate mission, goals, strengths, opportunities, priorities, and evaluation in a manner that enhances both decision-making and presentations about campus needs. Strategic planning leads to strategic management because it forces confrontation with choices and reasons. A strategic planning illustrative worklist is attached. Contains 13 references. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED309695

Strategic Plans and Self-Studies: Seldom Linked, Always Tied

by

Dr. Robert A. Scott
President
Ramapo College of New Jersey

Invited presentation at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina, August 16, 1988

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Robert A. Scott

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

HE 022 553

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Strategic Plans and Self-Studies: Seldom Linked, Always Tied

by

Dr. Robert A. Scott
President
Ramapo College of New Jersey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?

III. WHY IS IT DONE?

IV. WHO DOES IT?

V. WHEN IS IT DONE?

VI. WHERE IS IT DONE?

VII. HOW IS IT DONE?

VIII. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

IX. CONCLUSION: TOWARD STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Strategic Plans and Self-Studies: Seldom Linked, Always Tied

by

Dr. Robert A. Scott, President
Ramapo College of New Jersey

I. Introduction

For the past ten years, I have been actively involved in strategic planning for colleges, universities and corporations. In Indiana, I was responsible for guiding campus plans at more than sixty campuses. At Ramapo College, I have put my learning and experience to work and believe more than ever that strategic planning can also be considered as organizational learning.

The refinement of a strategic plan and the preparation for continued accreditation are obviously major events in an institution's life. Unfortunately, they are far too often kept separate. Indeed, they are seldom linked, but always tied. Strategic planning requires that we know (1.) who we (institutionally) are, (2.) where we are going, (3.) how we propose to get there, and have committed (4.) the leadership, staff and financial resources necessary for the trip.

Invited presentation at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina, August 16, 1988.

Compare that definition of strategic planning with this description of the institutional self-study for regional accreditation:

> Regional accreditation attests that "an institution knows what it wants to do, knows how to go about doing it, is in fact already doing what it says it is, and can be expected to do so in the foreseeable future" (Chambers, p.10.)

Similarly, strategic planning assumes that an institution has a high degree of autonomy for self-governance, especially with regard to financial management and to setting priorities. Accreditation assumes that a campus, or the unit to be accredited, has responsibility for self-regulation.

Chambers, quoted above, continues his discussion of the self-study as an instrument of institutional planning by reporting that the accreditation self-study is a chance to assess and clarify the institution's identity (or distinctiveness) and to "diagnose the healthiness of the balance between its goals and its programs, its aspirations and its resources, its romantic dreaming and its realistic prospects" (Chambers, p. 13). Chambers argues that we should bring the searching and systematic standards we bring to teaching and scholarship to the assessment of an institution's quality as well (p. 13).

For these reasons, it is highly appropriate that a "primer" on strategic planning be related to the institutional self-study and institutional attempts at assessment.

II. What is Strategic Planning?

But what is strategic planning? Is it just another buzzword borrowed from industry? How does it differ from long-range planning? Why has it become so important?

Strategic planning is about learning, especially organizational learning. In this view, as expressed by Arie De Geus, of the Royal Dutch Shell Group, strategic planning is not simply about projecting trends, but about helping an organization learn a new mindset in response to external forces and a new organizational model for decision-making (De Geus, p. 70).

Mike Kami (1988a) distinguishes strategic planning from long-range planning by characterizing the former as preparation for future organizational readiness, while the latter -- long-range planning -- is often characterized as a list of desired future results. McKenna (1988) and Keller (1983) both advise that strategic planning is concerned about markets as well as mission, external forces as well as faculty goals, while long-range planning has traditionally been an extrapolation of mission and goals into the future.

Strategic planning, then, is about organizational learning and readiness in the face of changing external conditions. It emphasizes "what if," not only "this is ...!"

Strategic planning requires us to analyze history and culture as well as data in order to determine the shape of an organization's characteristics, and not simply project the shape of current characteristics into the future.

Strategic planning, and, as we shall see, strategic management, requires that we understand the internal and external environmental forces that affect our institutions, and what we do as well as how we do it. The purpose is to know one's institution and its opportunities and challenges in order to make informed and strategic, or fundamental, choices of direction based on history, mission, strength, and opportunities. This analysis requires an examination of the strengths and weaknesses associated with internal environmental forces, and the opportunities and dangers associated with external forces.

Most descriptions of strategy and strategic planning make it sound like an orderly process, with an expectation that all planned courses of action will be implemented on schedule. This image is misleading. The environments on and off campus are too dynamic for this image to capture reality. Instead, I

like the thesis that "crafting" better captures the process by which effective strategies are created. "Craft," in Professor Mintzberg's words, "evokes traditional skills, dedication, perfection through the mastery of detail ... not so much thinking and reason as involvement, a feeling of intimacy and harmony with the materials at hand, developed through long experience and commitment," (Mintzberg, p.66). For his metaphor, Professor Mintzberg uses the image of the potter, sitting at her wheel with a lump of clay. For him, managers are craftsmen and strategy is their clay. Strategy can be created; it can emerge.

Indeed, strategy development requires both rational analysis and the "feel" of the potter for the prospects of her clay. For these reasons, I define strategic planning as:

> the rational determination of where we are, the vision of where we want to be, and the development of a design for getting there.

This last element - design - consists of an action plan, with specific steps, assignments, deadlines, and the flexibility to meet the challenges of change and uncertainty (Scott, P. 2,3).

III. Why is it done?

Why do we do strategic planning? Why is there more of an imperative now to consider the external environment and markets, in addition to mission and goals? The answer should

be self-evident. Change, as Heraclitus said, is the only constant. In the 1960's, higher education institutions could concentrate on internal concerns because the supply of students and funds was generally plentiful - and not just any students, but those who by and large fit the same demographic profile of faculty, administrators and alumni.

But then there was change - a new consciousness about the role of institutions, new circumstances and context for campus actions, and new populations of students, faculty, and staff. In short, the time when institutions could pay most attention to their mission and goals, and nearly ignore external forces,was over. Now, faculty as well as administrators express concern about market and niche (McKenna, p. 7). It is widely recognized that external changes can have a profound effect on an institution's progress.

If change is constant, then a rigid long-range plan will be outdated quickly. Yet every institution needs a roadmap which sets a direction, assists in setting priorities and making choices, and expresses a "big" idea, an overarching vision of the goals to be attained.

We need to develop a strategic plan, then, in order for leaders, staff, and others to know -- and be a part of -- a statement of mission and purpose, and gain an understanding of

the campus environment (strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and risks), goals, resources, responsibilities and timing for action. The strategic plan provides managers with a set of measures by which to assess progress and exercise control. The question, "How are we doing?" is as important as "Where are we going?"

The areas of change and challenge include student, faculty and patron demographics; student program interests; the economic circumstances for higher education; institutional competition and the need for a competitive advantage; the political climate, including tax support for further education; technological advances in instruction, research, and service; and changes in social expectations about services offered at colleges and universities.

Strategic plans which not only analyze institutional and comparative trend data reflecting these changes, but also express assumptions about each, can be developed into guides for campus decision-making about priorities and allocations, and into sales tools for fund raising and budget presentations.

In North Carolina, student demographics should be a concern. When one combines the decline in high school graduates (about 10.4% from 1983 to 1993) with the data on student interest in science and engineering, the college-going rates of minority

youth, student aid availability, and North Carolina's new regulation which greatly reduces and limits out-of-state enrollment, then one has to develop a plan by student sector. The plan should include goals by sector (e.g. part-time, first-time freshmen accounted for 18.2% increase in enrollment at historically black public colleges in fall 1987), a rationale for the activities to be undertaken in support of the goals, and a method for monitoring progress toward goals and measuring the effectiveness of the activities.

The Ramapo College plan includes goals, assumptions, and activities for recruitment, retention, operating budget, and capital budget, and takes no more than 18 pages. Topics such as faculty recruiting, affirmative action, and new programs are included as assumptions and activities in support of these primary goals.

The brief bibliography distributed as Attachment "A" provides further guidance to the question of "Why strategic planning is done."

IV. **Who does it?**

The strategic plan is not only the rational determination of where we are - our context - and our vision of where we want to be - our goals - but also a design of how to get from here to

there. Assignments, schedules, and accountability are included along with flexibility.

For trustees and the president, strategic planning is inseparable from stewardship (McKenna, p. 8). They must be concerned regularly with questions of priorities: What do we do best? What should we do best?

The identity of those involved in strategic planning will depend upon whether the plan is at the institution or unit level. Nevertheless, the parallels are clear. Whether we speak of the president or the director of the library or the dean of engineering, we recognize that the senior manager is responsible for setting, managing, and monitoring direction. Other aspects of developing the plan are similar. Whether a task force is charged with developing the plan, or constituents are asked to comment on the plan as it is developed, the requirement for active participation is the same. Those who must implement a plan, and those who are affected by it, must understand and, one hopes, believe in it. After all, the written plan will include goals, names of those responsible and due dates.

In addition to a "crusader" for the plan - probably the chancellor or president - managers need a set of neutral "eyes and ears." They need someone to advise the chief executive on

concerns and fears that are not expressed at public hearings and in written communication. A successful plan requires openness and access to data. A consultant can help. An outside observer can comment on potential linkages between strengths and opportunities which may be overlooked by those close at hand. Managers need an informed consultant to question but not necessarily to dampen the enthusiasm expressed for certain goals and initiatives. In short, each plan under development requires, in my view, an outside perspective to ensure that the content and the process of the plan are complete, understood and accepted. I engaged Dr. Jana Matthews to do this for me and recommend her highly. However, the bottom line is that all on campus must be involved, but the campus CEO is responsible.

V. When is it done?

When do we need to review, update or develop a strategic plan? George Keller says that most institutions develop a plan when there is a crisis, or a major change in leadership, or when there is "lust," a new passion for excellence in some endeavor (Keller, 1988, p. 5). In some ways, we test the plan whenever we make a major decision, such as an appointment or a purchase. Still others, such as McKenna (p. 8), say that the Board should review the plan at every meeting by reviewing these questions:

What is our strategic mission?

Has our position changed?

Are there new forces influencing our direction?

What are we doing best?

Is our strategic mission clearly communicated among all our constituents?

Others favor an annual review of a plan which includes a review of assumptions and forecasts progress three to five years into the future.

The strategic plan should be, must be, a dynamic document, not static or shelf-bound. Yet it must be of sufficient quality that its fundamental assumptions about strengths, opportunities, and direction are not questioned and rethought monthly. This would be like pulling up the carrots every week to see if roots have developed.

On the other hand, the plan must be dynamic and flexible, allowing for changes in accordance with changes in the environment. Even the farmer must make adjustments based on the weather.

The bulk of data and information on which the plan is based should be sound; changes should be marginal, not fundamental-unless, of course, there is a crisis. The very act of

exercising the plan - making decisions, with it as a background - should test it. This is especially true when the plan is used as the first step in developing an operating and capital plan, each of which should be related to the other and to the strategic plan.

While the plan itself should not be taken up by the roots frequently, the assumptions on which directions have been set should be updated regularly. A formal database - or profile of the institution or organization, and the relevant features of the external environment - should be updated and monitored religiously.

VI. **Where is it done?**

Strategic planning must involve all levels of an organization in a systematic manner, and the plans of each level must be related to operating and capital budgets. Let us use the library as an example.

Whether the manager is responsible for a system, a campus, or a unit, the approach to strategic planning is similar. The manager must know the internal and external environment very well - in objective as well as subjective terms. The manager must formulate a set of assumptions about the forces that affect the system, campus or the unit, and articulate the major ways in which each is related. The draft institutional plan

should include data, assumptions, and suggestions about the direction of each unit, including for example, the library; the plan for each unit should relate its assumptions and strategy to the institutional plan, and it should be related to the system plan. The library, after all, is both part of the internal environment for other units, connected to the external environment in many important ways, and is susceptible to the same changes as the institution as a whole. The issues of student demographics, the economy, institutional competition and societal expectations all affect the curriculum, and therefore the library, of every institution.

The timing of plan development is also the same. Libraries face crisis and passion just as entire institutions do. They also must set and consider future directions, especially with regard to collection building and facility needs.

As I have thought about libraries - both for our own strategic plan at Ramapo and in preparation for this presentation - I have wondered about the major challenges libraries face. Space concerns are constant. New technologies for the management of both information and space are increasingly available. The falling value of the dollar affects the purchase of foreign books and materials, especially in world regions such as Asia, where collections must be improved or built anew. New trends

in education force choices about whether a library should grow in new ways or continue with earlier topics.

For a library, the reasons for developing a strategic plan may be the desire for a distinctive identity or greater recognition either on campus or off, improved rankings, new opportunities from which to choose, a desire to gain a competitive advantage for service or for hiring staff, facility needs, either system or campus requirements, or some combination of pressures.

The library -- or the Physics Department or the Business School -- will develop its strategic plan in tandem with the campus. The mission statement, statistical profile, assumptions about internal and external environmental forces, analysis of opportunities and risks, and suggestions for future directions all parallel the campus-wide effort.

Developing the strategic plan helps us lay the ground rules for future decision-making and priority-setting. Organizations cannot do everything. Choices must be made and flexibility maintained. The strategic plan helps develop today's actions for future institutional readiness, in order to deal with whatever unforeseen needs may arise. If the manager - whether chancellor, president, librarian or dean - does not think ahead about opportunities and risks, strengths and weaknesses,

mission and market, then day-to-day decisions may very well not lead to the goals that have been set.

VII How is it done?

Attachment "B," "Strategic Planning - Illustrative Worksheet" gives an overview of how strategic planning is done. The Worksheet includes all the elements required by strategic planning, such as:

* a commitment from top leadership, including the board
* a timetable
* an open process
* data shared widely
* assigned responsibilities
* consultation with constituent groups
* a statement of campus philosophy, tradition, goals, and key characteristics; a mission statement or strategic planning statement
* an analysis of internal forces (the inside-out look) including mission, goals, current programs, current staffing
* an analysis of external forces (the outside-in look) including market, niche, new needs
* an analysis of assumptions concerning both internal and external forces
* an analysis of clientele, etc.
* an analysis of comparative standing

* listen! - talk! - data! - listen ! - talk! - data!
* refine each draft - show how the document has been improved by consultations with

- faculty	- guidance counselors
- staff	- high school students
- students	- adult students
- unions	- alumni
- state leaders	- community leaders

* match internal strengths and values to external opportunities and constraints
* review recommendations in draft form - tie to the data!
* keep data up to date
* emphasize values and tradition as well as data

Through this process, the institution can determine more carefully probable clients, program and service mix, and service area; comparative advantage compared to other institutions and programs, and unit plans which complement the institution's plan.

In particular, plans should include detail about the following:

- increasing and reallocating resources
- developing human resources, especially professional development and career opportunities
- consolidating and restructuring programs and services
- expanding and reallocating facilities

- marketing to a mix of clients or to target groups of clients, e.g. part-time, adult, disabled, international, minority, regional students
- allocation of resources
- evaluation of activities in fulfillment of goals and objectives
- the triad of goals, activities and measures!

For example, at Ramapo College we developed the following initiatives as part of our strategic planning:

Oxford Honors Program for students in humanities and social sciences

BS/Graduate at Rutgers in science

Joint Venture with American Cyanamid

Partnership for Progress with West Side High School in Newark

Study Abroad

VIII Benefits

The benefits of strategic planning are several. In a recent presentation on a study of strategic planning, the researchers concluded that institutions engaged in it report "greater campus satisfaction with the process of planning, anticipated greater results from the planning process and ... are actually achieving increased funding ... per student and per faculty member" (Meredith, et al, 1988, pp 6 and 7).

As can be seen from this presentation, another benefit is that the strategic plan creates a foundation for the institutional accreditation self-study.

In addition, the strategic plan requires an assessment of strengths and weaknesses, the very basis of outcomes assessment and of measures of institutional effectiveness. And note that these assessments do not rely simply on standardized tests of the general intellectual skills of sophomores! In fact, outcomes assessment includes such indicators of institutional strength and effectiveness as student retention and graduation rates, job and graduate school placements, faculty scholarship, community programming, contributions to economic development, and much more. At Ramapo, we are assessing the effectiveness of our programs and services for freshmen, our general education program (using portfolio analysis), our majors, and the transition from the senior year to alumni status. Retention, graduate school admission, and career placement are major criteria for the outcomes.

Strategic planning offers still other results. According to Jana Matthews, it provides the following benefits:

1. Better understanding of the organization and its environment by first, second, and third-level managers.

2. The institution or unit is better prepared to act, to be both ready and flexible, instead of always reacting to change.
3. More people on campus can understand the rationale for decisions.
4. Campus community members are required to interact with each other, and with senior officers and trustees, in new ways (Matthews, 1988).

IX Conclusion: Toward Strategic Management

Strategic planning provides guidance for future actions; it is not just a list of hoped-for results. It helps us relate mission, goals, strengths, opportunities, priorities and evaluation in a manner that enhances both decision-making and presentations about the campus' needs. Strategic planning leads to strategic management because it forces us to confront choices and reasons.

In conclusion, I am reminded of Bernard Baruch's admonition:

> It is important to make certain that our efforts are directed at the decisive core of the problem, and not on distracting side issues. The more complex the difficulties we face, the more important it becomes to bear this in mind, for it is human nature to try to evade what we cannot cope with.

A successful strategic plan helps us cope by preparing us to act.

Thank you.

Attachment "A"

Strategic Plans and Self-Studies:
Seldom Linked, Always Tied

A Brief Bibliography

1. Albert, Kenneth J. (editor in chief). Handbook of Strategic Management. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983.

2. Below, Patrick J., Morrisey, George L., and Acomb, Betty L. The Executive Guide to Strategic Planning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.

3. Chambers, Robert H., III. "Enhancing Campus Quality Through Self-Study," pp. 9 - 22. Determining the Effectiveness of Campus Services, Robert A. Scott, editor. Jossey-Bass, March 1984.

4. De Geus, Arie P. "Planning and Learning." Harvard Business Review, March - April 1988, No. 2, pp. 70 - 74.

5. Kami, Michael J. Trigger Points. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1988 a.

6. Kami, Michael J. Kami Strategic Assumptions. II Q Update. 1988 b.

7. Keller, George. Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in Higher Education. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

8. Keller, George. "Academic Strategy: Five Years Later, An Interview with George Keller." AAHE Bulletin, February, 1988.

9. Matthews, Jana B. "The Process of Strategic Planning, or How to Move from Here to There." M and H Group periodic paper, June 1988.

10. McKenna, David L. "The Board's Role in Strategic Planning." AGB Reports, May/June 1988.

11. Meredith, Mark, Lenning, Oscar, and Cope, Robert. "After Six Years, Does Strategic Planning Make Any Difference?" Paper presented at the Association for Institutional Research Forum, Phoenix, May 15-18, 1988.

12. Mintzberg, Henry. "Crafting Strategy," Harvard Business Review, July/August 1987, p. 66.

13. Scott, Robert A. Strategic Responses to Demographic Change: Students, Faculty, and Patrons. Washington D.C.: The American Association of State Colleges and Universities in collaboration with Ramapo College of New Jersey, 1988.

Attachment "B"

Office of the President

505 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, New Jersey 07430-1680 • (201) 529-7607

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

Strategic Planning
Illustrative Worklist
(One-year calendar)

Dr. Robert A. Scott, President
Ramapo College of New Jersey

	Task	Time
1.	Present "Why" (benefits) and "What" (content) to Board of Trustees for discussion.	Month 1
2.	Develop statistical, historical profile of institution, including data on prospective and enrolled students, recruitment data, retention data, academic talent measures, program interest data, faculty data by field and status, staff data by department, facilities by condition and priority, operating budget by category, capital budget by category and priority, positions by department, etc.	Months 1 & 2
3.	Clarify roles of those responsible for plan and develop the schedule.	Month 1
4.	Present draft historical, statistical profile, "How" (process), and "When" (schedule), including responsibilities, to Board of Trustees for discussion.	Month 3
5.	Present "Why", "What", "How", "When", and profile to groups of constituents for comments and suggestions.	Month 4
6.	Develop draft strategic planning or mission statement, including campus history, tradition, special strengths and characteristics, market and populations to be served, etc.	Month 5
7.	Develop assumptions about internal and external environmental forces on the campus and express how they affect or relate to strengths, areas to be strengthened or curtailed, opportunities for instruction, research and service, competitive advantage, and challenges to institutional stability and integrity.	Month 6

- these forces will include the economy; the demographics of potential and current students, faculty, staff, and patrons; academic programs; student services; social expectations about college or university programs and services; institutional competition; technological advances in instruction, research and campus services; and any other critical issues.

Task	Time
8. Review assumptions and draft statements with all campus constituents in a series of open hearings. Engage a consultant to ensure that campus leadership is hearing and receiving deeply-felt comments.	Months 5, 6, & 7
9. Develop draft recommendations, with options and rationale, for strategic directions and goals in areas such as recruitment, retention, academic programs, operating budget, capital budget, services, etc.	Months 7 & 8
10. Review draft recommendations with campus constituents.	Months 8 & 9
11. Refine recommendations and goals for operating and capital budget categories, and review with constituents.	Months 10 & 11
12. Present three to five-year plan, with assignments and schedule, to the Board of Trustees for discussion. Review assumptions and assignments quarterly; review progress annually.	Month 12